

Wednesday 12:10-2:00pm, Milbank 306

Instructors:

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by appointment

THTRV3140 Fall 2023

Performing Women

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course actively interrogates the category of woman as it is mobilized in performance. What does such performance do to our understanding of gender and the body, and particularly, how does the public lens of an audience offer new possibilities for subversion and/or solidarity? This course offers canonical and new scholarship in the field to provide students an overview of the dense theoretical landscape around these debates. It is an actively collaborative class where together we seek to model a collective, albeit temporary, feminist praxis of shared and open access. To this end, the class will curate a digital exhibition of their choice with new and current instances of performing women as a digital humanities project. Finally, this course takes seriously its location in a woman's college in New York and requires students to engage with the BCRW Feminist Ephemera collection at the Barnard Archives, and produce their own original research.

This is a rigorous seminar requiring weekly digital work over and above the reading assignment, and original research. It is recommended for seniors and juniors.

REQUIREMENTS:

Class Participation: Students are expected to attend class regularly and participate in class discussion. This constitutes ten percent of the final grade. More than one unexcused absence may constitute a failing grade.

Weekly Response: There is a required viewing for each week. Students must respond to the performance on the class blog. This constitutes thirty percent of the final grade.

Research Paper and Online Archive: Students must engage with materials of a primary archive in for their final research on performing women. This may be a personal, institutional, online or informal archive. You may also create your own archive of personal interviews, oral or visual materials. The assignment constitutes sixty percent of the final grade. This assignment has three stages:

- Identify the archive and describe its significance and holdings relevant to your research in 2-3 pages. Due October 4 (10% of grade)
- Build out the online archive contribution on Omeka. Due November 1. (20% of grade)
- Final paper of 15 pages, with complete citation, due by midnight December 13. (30% of grade)

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Students successfully completing this course should be able

- to think about the category of woman as it is discussed and produced through performance.
- to work collaboratively to produce open access scholarship related to feminism
- to work with archival material to produce original research.

READINGS

There are no required textbooks for this course. All readings and performance videos will be posted online on Courseworks. Please make sure you have access to the page using your UNI. If you have trouble reading or opening any of the electronic files or videos, please email the instructor well in advance of the day the reading will be discussed in class. Average weekly reading load is 50-80 pages.

Disability Statement:

If you believe you may encounter barriers to the academic environment due to a documented disability or emerging health challenges, please feel free to contact me and/or the Center for Accessibility Resources & Disability Services (CARDS). Any student with approved academic accommodations is encouraged to contact me during office hours or via email. If you have questions regarding registering a disability or receiving accommodations for the semester,

please contact CARDS at (212) 854-4634, cards@barnard.edu, or learn more at barnard.edu/disabilityservices. CARDS is located in 101 Altschul Hall.

Honor Code:

Barnard Honor Code: Approved by the student body in 1912 and updated in 2016, the Code states:

We, the students of Barnard College, resolve to uphold the honor of the College by engaging with integrity in all of our academic pursuits. We affirm that academic integrity is the honorable creation and presentation of our own work. We acknowledge that it is our responsibility to seek clarification of proper forms of collaboration and use of academic resources in all assignments or exams. We consider academic integrity to include the proper use and care for all print, electronic, or other academic resources. We will respect the rights of others to engage in pursuit of learning in order to uphold our commitment to honor. We pledge to do all that is in our power to create a spirit of honesty and honor for its own sake.

Columbia Honor Code: *We, the undergraduate students of Columbia University, hereby pledge to value the integrity of our ideas and the ideas of others by honestly presenting our work, respecting authorship, and striving not simply for answers but for understanding in the pursuit of our common scholastic goals. In this way, we seek to build an academic community governed by our collective efforts, diligence, and Code of Honor. I affirm that I will not plagiarize, use unauthorized materials, or give or receive illegitimate help on assignments, papers, or examinations. I will also uphold equity and honesty in the evaluation of my work and the work of others. I do so to sustain a community built around this Code of Honor.*

September 6: Introductions, Digital Humanities Project, Archive Ethics, Community Agreement

September 13: Archive Fever

Taylor, Diana 2003: "Acts of Transfer," *Archive and the Repertoire*.

Marianne Hirsch: "Feminist Archives of Possibility," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, Volume 29, Issue 1, 2018

Visit to the Barnard Archives to view BCRW Feminist Ephemera Collection, read: <https://www.uproot.space/features/the-house-archives-built>, and explore: <https://collections.barnard.edu/public/repositories/2/resources/406>

Discussion Thread: Discuss one object from the Performing Women Omeka website

September 20: Digital Divides/Digital Collaborations

OMEKA workshop at the Digital Humanities Center 12:10-1:00pm

Noble, Safiya: "Searching for Black girls," *Algorithms of Opressions*, 2018

Kee, Jack Sm. "Imagine a Feminist Internet," *Development*, 60(1-2), 83-89

Discussion Thread: Discuss one object from the BCRW Ephemera Archive

September 27: Pleasure, Pain, Paranoia

Michel Foucault: "Modifications," "Forms of Problematization," "Morality and Practice of the Self," *The Use of Pleasure: History of Sexuality Volume 2*, pages 3-32

Elaine Scarry: "The Interior Structure of the Artifact," *The Body in Pain*, pages 278-326

Eve Sedgwick: "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading Or, You're so Paranoid You Probably Think This Essay is About You," *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, pages 123-152

Required Viewing: Cindy Sherman, *Nobody's Here But Me*, 1994

October 4: Denaturing the body

Donna Harraway: "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, pages 183-202

Sara Giddens and Simon Jones: "De-Second_Naturing: Word Becoming Flesh in the Work of Bodies in Flight," *Sexualities/Textualities and Technologies: Writings of the Body in 21st Century Performance*, pages 38-49

Laura Mulvey: "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Visual and Other Pleasures*, pages 14-30

Required Viewing: Black Mirror Season 4 Episode 1, USS Callister, 2017

October 11: Resenting Reproduction

Peggy Phelan: "The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction," *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, pages 146-166

Geraldine Harris: "The Means of Reproduction: The Female Performance Art Tradition, Form, Humour and Ideology," *Staging Femininities: Performance and Performativity*, pages 27-54

Required Viewing: The Handmaid's Tale: A Woman's Place, Season 1 Episode 6, 2017

October 18: Unholy Matrimony

Mitra, Shayoni: "Violating Performance: Women, Law and the State of Exception," *Gender, Space, and Resistance*, 2013

Nwatu, Samuel Ihuoma: "Constitutionality of 'bride price' in Nigeria: Echoes from the Supreme Court of Uganda," *Commonwealth Law Bulletin*

Required Viewing: The Great Indian Kitchen, Amazon Prime

October 25: Displacing the Subject

Judith Butler: "Transpossessions, or Bodies Beyond Themselves," *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*, pages 55-63

Jose Munoz: "The White to be Angry: Vaginal Crème Davis's Terrorist Drag," *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*, pages 93-118

Sara Ahmed: "Disorientation and Queer Objects," *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, pages 157-180

Required Viewing: Vaginal Davis, *Vaginal Davis at ephemeropteræ*, 2013

November 1: Extreme Body Mutilation: Chastity and Femininity

Steele, Valerie: "Dressed to Kill: The Medical Consequences of Corsetry," *The Corset: A Cultural History* 2001

Proudman, Charlotte: "Female Genital Mutilation: An overview," *Female Genital Mutilation: When Culture and Law Clash*.

Explore: Grimm's Anatomy Exhibit at Mutter Museum

Required Viewing: Tang Yuen Mei Joani, *Chinese Foot Binding: The Vanishing Louts*, 2004

November 8: Working Women – The Middle East and the New Enslavement

hooks, bell. "rethinking the nature of work," "sisterhood: political solidarity among women," *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*.

Demissie, Fassil: "Ethiopian female domestic workers in the Middle East and Gulf States," *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*

Dessiye, Mesfin and Guday Emirie: "Living and working as a domestic worker in the Middle East: the experience of migrant returnees in Girana Town, North Wollo, Ethiopia," *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*

Required Viewing: Arda Nederveen, *Young and Invisible: Ethiopian and Somali Domestic Workers*, 2012

November 15: Menstruation, Isolation and The Taboo of the Bodily Functions

Hennegan, Julie: Women's and girls' experiences of menstruation in low- and middle-income countries," *PloS Medicine*, 2019

Chabih, Houda Driss: "The menstrual taboo and the nuances of misogyny: Comparing feminine Hygiene TV advertisements in the Arab and western worlds," *Journal of Arab and Muslim Media Research*, 2022

Class Theatre Outing: *Snatch Adams & Tainty MsCracken Present It's That Time of the Month*, Signature Theatre, date tbd

November 22: Thanksgiving break

November 29: Shut up and Play: Gender Policing Sports

Jordan-Young, Rebecca: "Athleticism," *Testosterone: An Unauthorized Biography*

Xavier, Neena and Janet McGill: "Women, Sports and Activism," *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism*.

Required Listening: Radiolab, *Gonads: Dutee*, 2022

December 6: Laughing, Crying

Ian Brodie: "Who is this Standup Comedian?: The Performance of Self," *A Vulgar Art: A New Approach to Stand-up Comedy*

Maggie Hennefeld: "[Towards a Feminist Politics of Comedy and History](#)," *Feminist Media Matter*,

Lara Zarum: "Hannah Gadsby and Comedy's Toxic Masculinity Problem," *Village Voice*,

Required Viewing: Hannah Gadsby, *Nanette*, 2018

Final Papers DUE BY MIDNIGHT December 13